3: Chinnery G, E-5 (1929) 1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10

A large number of the apparently sterile women are very old. The usual reply to a question concerning the lack of children is that the bearing of children is a burden which interferes with the efficiency of women in garden and road work, or the oft repeated, "laze along push push", one suggesting deliberate abortion, and the other lack of desire.

APATHY.

We are dealing with a people who have been profoundly upset by the coming of European settlement, which during the first few years rudely interrupted local conditions of life, and practically withdrew the majority of able-bodied males and many females of reproductive age from the villages, and continued to drain the population of its best blood year after year. The old German methods of uniting the stocks meant, in effect, that bush people and coastal people were deprived of their racial and social individuality, and compelled to live more or less on one another's ground, thus perforce losing the very characteristics that make for group stability. By the land alienation that took place during these years, natives found themselves being gradually pushed into corners here and there by the ever-expanding European settlement. The road work and other uses to which the relatively few remaining able-bodied men were put left small time for gardening and other native occupations. On top of these disturbing influences came the Mission with its new cultures. Pressure was brought to bear on all practices having the slightest resemblance to European standards of immorality. The natives who led an active sexual life with more or less promiscuity, in which they were constantly stimulated by various dances that gave incentive to and opportunity for sexual expression, now heard that their most natural and spontaneous activities were things of which to be ashamed, unless regulated in accordance with the standards taught by the Mission. As a prominent headman said to me, "the romance, excitement, and adventure of sex have gone. Always the native teachers speak of it in church and school as a thing of shame. Before, men and women gratified their desires when and where they found them. Now, to go into the bush with your lover is to be publicly shamed. The Missions say to the people who are married, 'You must have more children', but how can there be children without sex life, and how can there be sex life without sex play. Our night dances are practically forbidden, romance and adventure now appear to be sins, and the boys and girls are ashamed, and have no desire ('laze along, push push')."

There is no doubt that in olden days the native ceremonial and social life stimulated considerable sexual freedom. In many places women were permitted to have lovers who were to a certain extent recognized socially, and who contributed payments to the husband.